

REMARKS

In response to the Examiner's comments regarding the specification in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Office Action, a substitute specification is submitted herewith, which includes appropriate headings, and conforms with U.S. practice standards. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of these grounds of objection are respectfully requested.

Claims 7, 8, 11-13 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention, based on certain formal issues identified by the Examiner. In response to these grounds of rejection, Applicants have amended the claims in the manner which addresses and is believed to resolve each of the cited formal issues. Reconsideration and withdrawal of these grounds of rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Berdan et al. However, as discussed in greater detail hereinafter, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims which remain of record herein distinguish over Berdan et al, whether considered by itself or together with other references.

The present invention is directed to a vehicle covering or trim part which is made up of a support element that can be fastened to the body of a vehicle, for example using an adhesive material joint, and a visible or covering element that

can be connected to the support element by snapping it in place onto the latter. For this purpose, the visible element has a plurality of discrete snap-in projections formed at a plurality of connection points that are arranged consecutively along a longitudinal axis of the visible element, and are spaced apart from one another. The support element, in turn, has a corresponding plurality of discrete snap-in sockets which are arranged in a complementary manner, so that the visible element can be connected quickly and easily in a desired position, by snapping it in place on the support element.

The latter features of the invention are recited in Claim 6. Claim 1 further specifies that at least one of the two elements (that is, the support element and the visible element) comprises at least two discrete parts, with the number of parts that make up the support element differing from the number of parts that make up the visible element. This feature of the invention can be seen, for example, in Figures 1 and 2.

The Berdan et al reference discloses a system for attaching a trim piece to a panel of a vehicle, where the trim piece includes a cover and a retaining strip, with the retaining strip being secured to the vehicle body by an adhesive. As shown, for example, in Figures 2, 3 and 5, in Berdan et al, the mechanism by which the outer cover 19 of the trim piece 18 is attached to the retaining strip 36 comprises extruded longitudinally extending channels 34, into which extruded longitudinally extending legs 26 can be snapped. Accordingly, with this

arrangement, it is possible for there to be relative longitudinal motion between the outer cover 19 and the retaining strip 36.

None of the embodiments disclosed in Berdan et al suggests the provision of a plurality of discrete snap-in projections formed at a plurality of connection points that are arranged consecutively along a longitudinal axis of the visible element and are spaced apart from one another, as recited in Claim 6. In addition, Berdan et al also fails to teach or suggest a covering component in which either or both of the support element and the visible element are designed in at least two discrete parts, with the number of parts differing for the respective elements, as recited in Claim 2 as amended. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent Claims 2 and 6 distinguishes over the Berdan et al reference, as do the remaining claims, which depend either directly or indirectly therefrom.

Finally, Claim 9 further specifies that the snap-in sockets in the support element "form passage openings" and are arranged recessed with respect to a side of the support element that is provided for fastening to the vehicle. In addition, Claim 18 further specifies that a side of the support element that is provided for fastening to the vehicle has an automatically centering transverse surface contour. Neither of the latter features of the invention appears to be taught or suggested by Berdan et al, and accordingly, Claims 9 and 18 distinguish over Berdan et al for that additional reason as well.

In light of the foregoing remarks, this application should be in condition for allowance, and early passage of this case to issue is respectfully requested. If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #095309.52833US).

Respectfully submitted,



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